

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Experiences of First-Year Students with Disabilities Who Had a Faculty

Mentor

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PAGES: 90

The transition from high school to college is difficult for students and they need to learn to navigate the transition in order to be successful and stay in school. This process is especially challenging for many students with disabilities who may face additional difficulties due to their disability. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how having a faculty mentorship influences the collegiate experience of students with disabilities.

This study was grounded in qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenology methodology. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with students with disabilities who had a faculty mentor during their first semester of college. Data analysis was conducted based on thematic analysis (Van Manen, 1990), and predominant themes were discovered.

The researcher concluded faculty mentorship does affect the collegiate experience of students with disabilities in considerable ways. Students met significant challenges adjusting to the collegiate life. Faculty mentorship assisted some of these students during their transition from high school to college. Based on these themes, specific conclusions were drawn regarding students with disabilities transition and the postsecondary

accommodation process. Suggestions were presented for university administrators, faculty, and staff, all of which work with students with disabilities.